

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

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EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR FROM DEPUTY ASST. SEC. LUERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

AGS: GY, UK, PFOR

SUBJECT:GUYANA: TALK WITH SONNY RAMPHAL

1. SUMMARY. WHILE IN LONDON AND DITCHLEY, I HAD TWO LONG PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH SONNY RAMPHAL, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH, ABOUT GUYANA. AS ALWAYS HE WAS DIRECT AND SUBTLE. HE IS ALREADY REMARKABLY UNINFORMED ABOUT BURNHAM'S MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST EIGHT MONTHS. HE DOES TALK TO BURNHAM BY PHONE PERIODICALLY AND DID SO JUST LAST WEEK. FOLLOWING ARE SOME HIGH"POINTS OF THE CONVERSATION WHICH AS YOU SEE WAS-HIGHLY SENSITIVE: I WOULD HOPE YOU WOULD TREAT THE INFORMATION WITH APPROPRIATE DELICACY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MOST SURPRISING ASPECT OF RAMPHAL'S VIEWS WAS THAT HE WAS UNAWARE THAT BURNHAM WAS NOW SPEAKING OPENLY ABOUT MARXISM-LENINISM AS THE GUIDING IDEOLOGY OF THE PNC. HE WAS SO SKEPTICAL THAT HE CHECKED WITH PAT PATTERSON (NOW IN LONDON FOR A BRIEF TIME) TO CONFIRM

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MY REMARKS. PATTERSON, ACCORDING TO RAMPHAL, GRAVELY

CONFIRMED THE REPORT. (RAMPHAL SAID THAT PATTERSON MAY NOT STAY LONG AS HEAD GUYBAU, BUT MIGHT OPT FOR A JOB OUTSIDE OF GUYANA). RAMPHAL'S ANALYSIS OF BURNHAM'S TURN IS THAT HE STILL IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY AT LEAST,

COMPETING WITH CHEDDI JAGAN. BURNHAM IS OBSESSED BY THE FACT THAT JAGAN CONTINUES TO HOLD A PREEMINENT POSITION IN THE MINDS OF THIRD WORLD LEADERS. BURNHAM'S INCREASING RADICAL POSTURE IS EXPLAINED AT LEAST IN PART ACCORDING TO SONNY, BY NEED TO REPLACE JAGAN IN HISTORY AND IN REALITY. RAMPHAL SAYS THAT BURNHAM DOES NOT "BELIEVE" IN MARXISM-LENINISM. HE IS JUST MOVING IN INCREMENTS, TESTING THE WATER, IMPROVISING, AND STILL HIGHLY SUSCEPTIBLE TO PERSONAL INFLUENCE AND ERRATIC BEHAVIOR.

3. CONVINCED THAT BURNHAM HAS NOT "DECIDED" ANYTHING, RAMPHAL BELIEVES IT ESSENTIAL THAT THE UNITED STATES CONTINUE A MODERATE COURSE TOWARD THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO RAMPHAL, BURNHAM BELIEVES THAT:

-- U.S. IS SERIOUSLY OUT TO "DESTABILIZE" GUYANA GOVERNMENT.

-- ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN U.S. GOVERNMENT MORE AGGRESSIVE POSTURE ON GUYANA VOTING IN UN AND OUR ALLEGED POLICY OF PUNISHING THOSE WHO VOTE AGAINST U.S.

RAMPHAL RECOMMENDS THAT WE TAKE EXTRA MEASURES TO REASSURE BURNHAM THAT U.S. IS NOT UNDERTAKING SPECIAL MEASURES TO REMOVE HIM FROM POWER.

4. ON BORDER QUESTIONS, RAMPHAL IS CONFUSED BY RECENT REPORTS OF BRAZILIAN AND VENEZUELAN BORDER ACTIVITIES. I SAID THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT EITHER BRAZILIANS OR VENEZUELAN HAVE TROOPS ON THE BORDER OR HAVE AGGRESSIVE INTENTIONS TOWARD GUYANA. RAMPHAL AGREED THAT THIS MUST SURELY BE THE CASE AND THAT THE SOURCE OF THE MISINFORMATION MIGHT WELL BE FOREIGN MINISTER WILLS WHO EXAGGERATES AND DRAMATIZES EVENTS
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TO BURNHAM FOR PERSONAL REASONS.

5. RAMPHAL SPOKE AT LENGTH ON THE PERSONALITIES IN THE CABINET AND LAMENTED THAT THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY MODERATING FORCE IN THE CABINET. HE BELIEVES THAT:

-- WILLS IS SCHIZOID. HE HAS LONG HAD A REPUTATION AS A PATHOLOGICAL LIAR, WHO IS BRILLIANT BUT COMPLETELY

UNTRUSTWORTHY. WILLS IS THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN THE CABINET BECAUSE HIS INTELLECT APPEALS TO BURNHAM; YET IS AMBITION AND DECEIT LEAD BURNHAM ASTRAY.

-- REID HAS BECOME A SOCIALIST AND REALLY BELIEVES.

-- DESMOND HOYTE IS REASONABLE BUT SO AMBITIOUS THAT HE WILL DO ANYTHING NECESSARY TO STAY IN OFFICE.

-- JACK HAS THE CLASSICAL SYNDROME OF A MAN WITH A BRAIN TUMOR -- LUCID 90 OF THE TIME BUT ABSOLUTELY BATS AND UNPREDICTABLE FOR THE REMAINING 10 (RAMPHAL DID NOT MEAN TO SAY JACK HAS A TUMOR -- IT WAS JUST HIS WAY OF DESCRIBING THE SYNDROME).

-- GAVIN KENNARD IS THE ONLY SENSITIVE AND MODERATE CABINET MEMBER. BUT KENNARD IS AFRAID TO SPEAK UP IN CABINET MEETINGS. KENNARD RECENTLY TOLD RAMPHAL IN LONDON THAT BURNHAM WITHOUT RAMPHAL NOW PLAYS OUT HIS FANTASIES UNFETTERED.

6. COMMENT. RAMPHAL IS RELIEVED TO BE OUT OF GUYANA AND SAYS THE FINAL MONTHS WERE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM PERSONALLY. HIS HARSH CRITIQUE OF BURNHAM'S CABINET MAY BE A REFLECTION OF THAT BITTERNESS AND AN EFFORT TO DRAMATIZE HIS OWN IMPORTANCE IN THE PAST. YET HE SPOKE DISPASSIONATELY AS ALWAYS. HE STILL HAS MORE RESPECT FOR BURNHAM THAN ALL OF THE CABINET.

7. RAMPHAL BELIEVES THAT ABOVE ALL BURNHAM WANTS TO KEEP HIS INDEPENDENCE. RAMPHAL SAID HE TOLD BURNHAM JUST LAST WEEK ON THE PHONE THAT GUYANA HAS MORE TO FEAR FROM CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION NOW THAN BEFORE ANGOLA. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO WARN BURNHAM ABOUT TOO CLOSE AN ASSOCIATION WITH CUBA PLAYING UP THE CLOSE TIES BETWEEN JAGAN AND FIDEL AND THE SOVIETS. BUT THE FUTURE COURSE OF GUYANESE/CUBAN RELATIONS WILL IN LARGE PART BE DETERMINED, ACCORDING TO RAMPHAL, BY EVENTS IN AFRICA. SHOULD CUBA (AND THE SOVIETS) EFFECTIVELY MANAGE TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES WITH A LONG RANGE BLACK STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WHITES IN RHODESIA, NAMIBIA AND SOUTH AFRICA THE IMPACT ON GUYANA (AND JAMAICA) WOULD BE PROFOUND. KISSINGER

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